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THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

VOL. I

FEBRUARY, 1901

NO. 5

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS

WITH THE MAINE TO SOUTH AFRICA *

By M. EUGÉNIE HIBBARD

Late Superintending Sister American Hospital Ship Maine

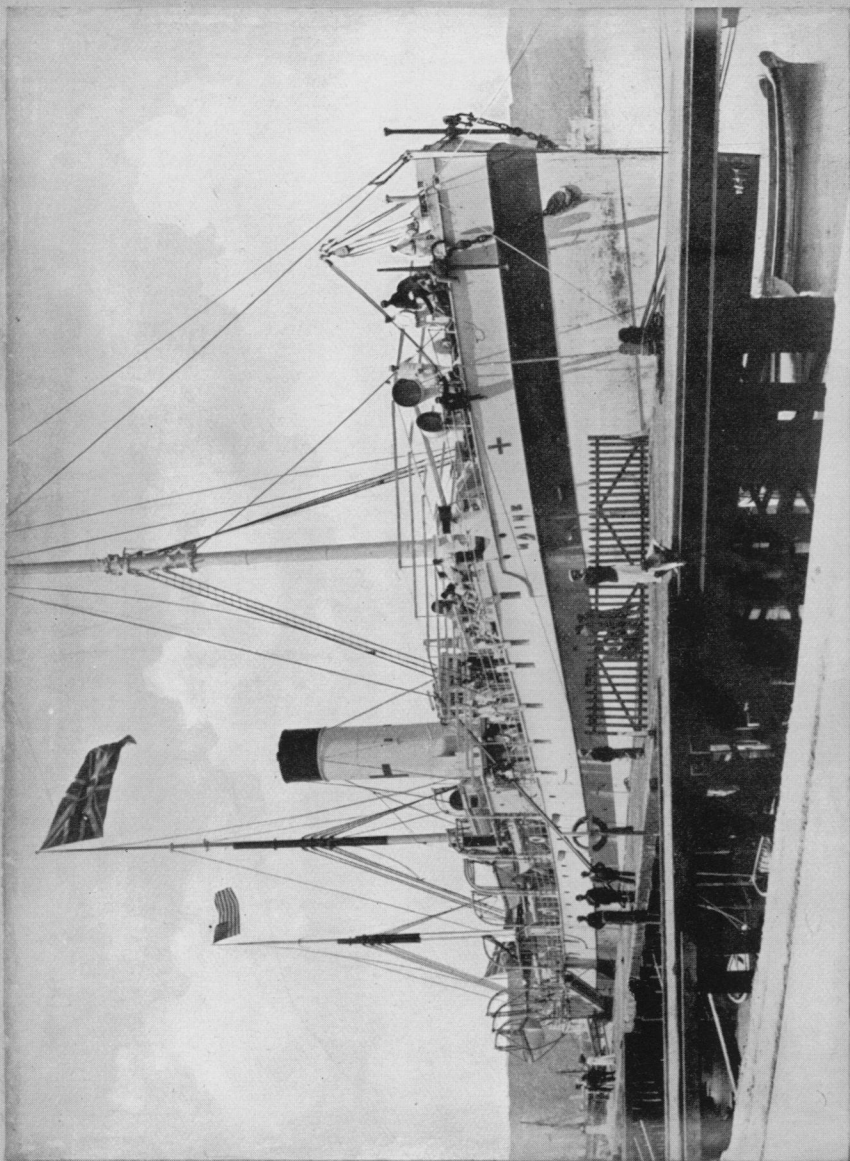
(Continued from October, 1900)

DURBAN, NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA, *February 5, 1900*.—To-day we received our first orders to be ready for patients, and, as previously stated, the hospital being in a suitable condition, a description of the nursing staff and accommodations will be interesting.

To bring clearly to mind the American character of the undertaking, it is necessary to make but three statements: First, the steamship Maine, of the Atlantic Transport Line, is the sister ship of the hospital ship Missouri. As the latter was placed at the disposal of the United States Government for the use of the sick and wounded during the Spanish-American War, the former was tendered by Mr. Bernard Baker, of Baltimore, Maryland (president of the line), to the British Government for similar service during the South African War in a spirit of "splendid generosity." Included in the loan of the ship was the gift of the amount necessary for the maintenance of the crew, which represented altogether from fifteen thousand dollars to twenty thousand dollars a month, and this was done "in the cause of humanity and international sympathy."

Secondly, the idea of equipping this ship as a hospital originated with Mrs. A. A. Blow, the wife of the manager of one of the richest syndicates in South Africa, secretary of the Great Shiba Mine, also an

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AMERICAN HOSPITAL SHIP MAINE

American, who, with the assistance and advice of Lady Randolph Churchill, formed a committee known as "The Executive Committee of the American Hospital Ship Fund," which, with this general committee, included most of the influential American women in England. Thus organized, the sum necessary, thirty thousand pounds (one hundred and fifty thousand dollars), to carry the idea into effect was quickly subscribed, and the steamship *Maine*, formerly a freight ship, was speedily transformed into the semblance of a hospital.

Thirdly, to intensify the character of the work, after receiving permission from the War-Office authorities in London, it was decided to compose the medical and nursing staff of American graduates, and the assistance of Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, of New York, was requested and granted. The service rendered by Mrs. Whitelaw Reid during the Spanish-American War was of inestimable value, and in securing her sympathy and co-operation the committee were to be congratulated.

To Mrs. Reid was delegated the work of selecting the medical and nursing staff and the number of orderlies required. This task, which was difficult in itself, was made more so by the fact that time was limited. Many days were devoted entirely to this work. Miss M. E. Wadley, graduate of Bellevue Hospital, was a most interested assistant. The nursing staff of the *Maine* is finally composed of one superintending sister, four nursing sisters, viz.: Miss V. Ludekins, graduate of Philadelphia Hospital, Philadelphia; Miss J. Manly, graduate of Presbyterian Hospital, Philadelphia; Miss M. J. MacPherson, graduate of Rhode Island Hospital, Providence, Rhode Island; and Miss Sara MacVeau, graduate of Bellevue Hospital, New York City, and eleven men, graduates of the Mills Training-School, connected with Bellevue Hospital, New York City. The names of these nurses are: Messrs. R. W. Ellsworth, A. H. Chapman, A. Gillies, J. F. McClintock, C. A. Austin, J. J. Reilly, V. C. Bates, W. B. Ruth, L. M. Howard, C. N. Nash, and W. C. Kuder, most of whom have seen hospital-ship service during the Spanish-American War, having served on the *Topeka* and *Solace*.

The nursing department is thus fully equipped by competent nurses, who are assisted by a number of orderlies, who are mostly Americans.

The work of transforming the ship into a suitable haven for sick and wounded soldiers is finally completed.

Needless to say, an immense amount of work has been done. Practically two new decks were built in London,—a 'tween deck for some of the wards and operating-room, and a promenade deck. The main and 'tween decks give accommodation for patients. This constitutes the hospital proper, and consists of five wards, named "*Whitelaw Reid*," containing thirty-nine beds; "*Britannia*," sixty-one; "*Bernard Baker*"

(officers' ward), seventeen; "Columbia," intended for convalescent patients, fifty-eight; and the "Committee" ward, for contagious diseases, contains four cots, making a total of one hundred and seventy-five. The changes made here have reduced somewhat the number of beds, but the probable length of time the patients would have to spend on board was taken into consideration, and it was found advisable to increase the facilities and space.

The wards are all painted a light green and are bright and cheerful. The equipment in the wards is all that can be desired in detail. The cots of white enamelled iron run in rows lengthwise of the ship, and are provided with sliding bed-trays, head-rests, and pulleys extending from the ceiling, by means of which a patient can easily change his position. The cots have movable sides, which need only be used in case of rough sea. Each ward is complete with needful accessories, medicine- and linen-chests and pantry equipment. A lift or elevator connects each ward with the promenade deck, greatly facilitating the reception of patients and making it feasible for bed patients to be brought on deck, the cots being so constructed as to make a comfortable stretcher. Air-chutes, electric lights, electric kettles, grills, and fans are in each ward. The latter we will find useful when the heat is intense.

A toilet- and bath-room is connected with each ward, but the accommodation in this respect leaves much to be desired. A number of movable bath-tubs have been supplied in case it should be found advisable to carry out the Brandt bath treatment in fever cases.

An extract from one of the London papers will give an idea of the impression made by the operating-room on English people:

"The Maine has an operating-chamber which for size and completeness of equipment is the most remarkable yet designed for South-African service, and the Röntgen-ray apparatus which has been supplied to the vessel is the finest we have so far seen. The space given up to the operating-room is large enough to admit of one of the latest patterned tables, with glass top, so necessary to complete antiseptic treatment. . . . The chamber is in convenient touch with the wards."

The various storerooms upon which we are dependent for our supplies are completely stocked and are divided into three departments—the medical comfort stores, personal equipment, and linen room. With the exception of the linen store the supplies are nearly all contributions, and include not only necessities, but many luxuries for the sick and wounded.

The dispensary has been furnished by a firm in London with medicines for a year, and is in charge of Messrs. Spotts and Haig, two pharmacists of New York.

The medical department has five American surgeons. Surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel Heusman, in command, represents the English Government; Major Julian Cabell, of Washington, D. C., second in command, is in charge of the medical work, with Drs. Eugene Dodge, of Arkansas; H. H. Rodman, New York; C. H. Weber, Philadelphia, and R. H. Hastings, of New Jersey, in charge of wards.

DURBAN, AT DOCK, *February 5, 1900*.—About three-forty-five this afternoon the train containing our patients arrived. The carriages or cars were all marked with the Geneva cross, and from the number of heads that appeared at the windows we concluded that a large number were on board. Disembarking was immediately begun, and as this was our first consignment, all patients were detailed to Britannia Ward. Some were able to walk down the broad, easy companion-way, others were assisted by orderlies and attendants, while the majority were obliged to come down on the elevator. By working above and below steadily and uniformly, sixty-one patients were received and assigned to their cots, and at five P.M. supper was served to all. The meal consisted of mutton broth, stewed chicken, bread and butter, pine-apple, and tea.

The evening was occupied by the surgeons attending to the dressings of wounds, etc., and by the nurses in giving baths. This consignment of sixty-one men is considered large for a hospital ship to receive at one time. The Britannia Ward is in charge of two head nurses, with two assistant nurses, two orderlies, two stewards, and one night nurse assigned to duty. The nurses' hours are from seven A.M. to seven P.M.

February 6, 1900.—This morning we found that the majority of the patients were able to be up, and many were allowed to go on deck. Books, magazines, games, and writing-paper were generally distributed by Miss Eleanor Warrender, acting secretary for the hospital ship Maine. Many letters were written, describing, no doubt, the terrible work of the past two weeks, and the "sisters" were often called upon to write for the disabled soldiers.

An extract from a letter written on the Maine whilst lying in Durban Harbor will give a soldier's view of the fighting which took place at Colenso:

"I dare say you have heard of me getting wounded on Sunday, the 21st, but I am about all right, and I am hoping to be in the fighting line again by February 20. I was just getting warm on Sunday morning when they hit me. It was about eleven o'clock. The bullet wasn't intended for me, but I got it, as it struck a stone and went in lengthways. I did not take much notice of it after it was bandaged, so I went on firing, but I wasn't firing long before bang! crash! then a whiz! and I got another bullet right over the top of the bandages; so that laid me out altogether. . . . We had been skirmishing and fighting for two or three days, but our worst day was Saturday. We were awake at three



STREET SCENE IN DURBAN

(See page 234)

A.M., a rifle for our pillow and the sky for our blankets, for we expected an attack. As daybreak showed itself we found the enemy about five miles off. So we advanced, and by eight o'clock we were within two thousand yards, and our artillery was shelling them. But they were in a splendid position. All the infantry in the world could not have fetched them out. Anyhow, we got the order to advance, and as soon as we did they began to drop us bullets, and shells came from all directions. Just fancy twenty thousand or twenty-five thousand of the enemy, all in trenches, and us advancing over flat ground. . . . About dinner-time we were falling in dozens, but nobody cared, everybody acting like mad men. We had not a word to say, but kept rushing on till many were pulled up by a bullet. . . . Our company attacked a kopje and we got in the Boer trenches, which cost us seven men, one killed, six wounded. There were about twenty or thirty Boers there. . . . Only about four Boers escaped out of twenty-five."

In the afternoon visitors with fruit, flowers, cigars, and other luxuries came on board.

February 7, 1900.—Information was received that probably one hundred patients would be assigned to our ship this afternoon. All was in readiness when the train arrived from Maritzburg about the same time as on the day of the first consignment, and seventy-nine men were handed over to our care, making a total of one hundred and forty cases now on board. The tired look and lagging step of the soldier showed the severe strain he had been under physically. The men were of the Dublin Fusileers, Hussars, West Yorks, and Lancers. The wounded were mostly from Spion Kop and Colenso. News from the front is most depressing, and the stories told by the patients of the impregnable positions occupied by the Boers makes one fear that much blood will be shed before Ladysmith is relieved. Our patients all express themselves satisfied with their care and surroundings.

February 12, 1900.—A very warm day. No more patients expected. We went over to the hospital ship Nubia, formerly a P. and O. steamer. We were cordially received and entertained by Colonel Hodder, commanding officer (son of the late Dr. Hodder, of Toronto, Canada), and Captain Hennerly. Sister Binnie, the superintending sister, took us over the ship, which seemed large compared to the Maine, but was not as complete an hospital ship. We returned to the Maine in the launch of the Golden Eagle, a yacht, the owner of which has offered six beds for the use of sick or wounded officers.

This evening Lady Randolph Churchill received a message that her son Jack had been shot in the left leg below the knee during a reconnoissance, and that he would be immediately sent down to the Maine for care and nursing.

February 13, 1900.—This afternoon brought us ten wounded officers. This ward is in charge of two "sisters" with two orderlies and one

night nurse. The "Whitelaw Reid" has now its full complement and is in charge of two "sisters" with one male nurse, two orderlies, one steward, and one night nurse. The "Columbia Ward" is also filled and is in charge of one head nurse, with two assistant nurses, two orderlies, and one steward.

February 14, 1900.—Sir William McCormac visited our hospital this morning. I had a few minutes' conversation with him, in which he told me he was on his way to join Lord Roberts, now at Modder River.

February 16, 1900.—Our first death occurred, result of typhoid and complications, revealed at the autopsy. Ensign at half-mast. . . . Captain Stone explored a small island in the inner anchorage to-day which is inhabited by coolies, who subsist by fishing. He was much interested in his voyage of discovery, and in seeing the coolie live and dress as in his native country.

February 18, 1900 (Sunday).—The morning broke bright, clear, and comparatively cool. After making morning rounds and finding wards and patients in good order and comfortable, I decided to spend a part of the day ashore. Since arriving in Durban my time had been fully occupied, and a chance to see something of the interesting town and suburbs was most alluring. We left the ship on the ten A.M. launch, and landing at the dock hailed a "'ricksha," similar to the Japanese "jin-ricksha," the usual means of conveyance here, especially for strangers, who enjoy the novelty of this means of transportation. The man who approached us with the little carriage was a Kaffir of Zulu descent. Most of them are muscular looking fellows and dress most fantastically. They wear on their heads either a pair of ox-horns, fastened to a leather strap which encircles their head, the horns decorated with flowing ribbons or small bells, or a huge affair that looks like a feather duster looms aloft. For clothing they usually wear a loose tunic, confined at the waist with a broad band of bright material worked in various colors. The short trousers to the knee and a pair of anklets are all that adorn their legs, which look like polished mahogany. Wearing no shoes, they move in a noiseless manner.

Once off, we lean back in our carriage and watch the motions of our "man of burden." The streets in Durban are very clean and the principal thoroughfare, West Street, is very wide and contains some fine buildings. On reaching the Town Hall we dismissed our "'ricksha," as the drive we contemplated taking was too far and too trying for anything but horses. We soon secured a comfortable-looking carriage and arranged to drive to "Umgeni" through the Berea, the most beautiful suburb of Durban.

(To be continued.)



AT HOME ON THE BEREA



"THE FLIER"—A ZULU 'RICKSHA PULLER